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Ex-Agent Tofte's Lawyer Says CIA Offered Deal

An attorney for Richard Helms, Central Intelligence Agency director, reportedly has offered to give former undercover agent Hans V. Tofte a copy of a letter the CIA once said didn't exist—provided Tofte drops his \$25,000 suit against Helms.

Byron N. Scott, Tofte's attorney, said the offer was made yesterday by attorney Laidler B. Mackall while he was taking a deposition from Tofte. Scott described the offer as a "wind-fall" in the case.

In his suit against Helms, Tofte claimed the letter had been removed from his home in Georgetown during a July "raid" by CIA agents who also took classified documents first spotted by an agent who had answered a newspaper advertisement for sale of the house.

Tofte was dismissed from the CIA when a board of inquiry found that publicity given to the incident damaged his future value to the agency.

The letter, Tofte said, was written by Helms and contained an invitation for the onetime Danish underground operative to return to the CIA from a

private business venture in Mason City, Iowa.

Scott said today that Mackall asked Tofte questions that demonstrated the attorney had seen the letter. "We knew he had seen either the letter or a copy," Scott said.

Tofte's attorney said Mackall then asked Tofte: "If we would give you a certified copy of the letter, would you drop the suit?"

According to an October newspaper story, Scott said, an unnamed CIA official denied the existence of the letter.

Tofte refused the offer yesterday, and Scott said his client would settle only for the original letter.

Mackall refused today to comment on the reported offer.

Helms is named in the suit as a private individual. The United States is not named as a defendant.

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